



**Operational Alerts** inform Signal Mutual Members of serious incidents within the Mutual that resulted in permanent disability, death, or a significant near miss. If you have similar operations, please share this Operational Alert and have a safety discussion with operation managers, supervisors, equipment operators, and all affected employees. It is imperative that management review their operational controls at all levels to mitigate similar hazardous conditions and/or acts.

## INCIDENT: BEAT THE HEAT

### SUMMARY OF RECENT INCIDENT

As we move into the summer months, the combination of increased heat and humidity can be a serious health threat to workers. Every year dozens of workers die, and thousands more become ill while working in extreme heat or humid conditions. Therefore, now is an excellent time to remind employees about the risks and basic preventive measures.

Over the past three years, more than 70 heat stress-related claims have been reported within the Mutual. Several heat-related illnesses (heat stroke, heat exhaustion, heat syncope (fainting), heat cramps, and heat rashes) can affect workers. Some of the symptoms are non-specific, which means when a worker is performing physical labor in a warm environment, any unusual symptom can be a sign of overheating.

### CONSIDERATIONS

Employers and workers should become familiar with the signs and symptoms of heat-related illnesses and know that when any of the symptoms are present, prompt first aid is crucial as symptoms can worsen quickly.

In addition to heat-related illnesses, high heat environments can increase a worker’s risk of injury, as it may result in sweaty palms, fogged safety glasses, dizziness, and reduced brain function responsible for reasoning ability. Burns may also occur from accidental contact with hot surfaces.

	Signs and Symptoms	What to Do
Less Severe	<p><b>Heat Rash/Prickly Heat</b></p> <p>Symptoms can occur in any order. For example, a person will not always experience heat cramps before they suffer from heat exhaustion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Red cluster of pimples or small blisters, usually on neck, upper chest, groin, under breasts, and in elbow creases</li> <li>• Extensive areas of skin that do not sweat on heat exposure, but present gooseflesh appearance that subsides with cool environments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When possible, a cooler, less humid work environment is the best treatment</li> <li>• Keep rash area dry</li> <li>• Powder can be applied to increase comfort</li> <li>• Do not use ointments or creams, as they may impair cooling—warm, moist skin can make the rash worse</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Heat Cramps</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Muscle cramps, pain, or spasms in the abdomen, arms, or legs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drink fluids every 15 to 20 minutes and eat a snack or sports drink</li> <li>• Avoid salt tablets</li> <li>• Get medical help if the worker has heart problems, is on a low sodium diet, or if cramps do not subside within 1 hour</li> </ul>
Severe	<p><b>Heat Syncope (Fainting)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fainting, dizziness, or light-headedness after standing or suddenly rising from a sitting/lying position</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sit or lie down in a cool place when beginning to feel faint or dizzy</li> <li>• Slowly drink water or clear juice</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Heat Exhaustion</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Headache</li> <li>• Nausea</li> <li>• Dizziness, weakness</li> <li>• Irritability</li> <li>• Thirst, heavy sweating</li> <li>• Elevated body temperature</li> <li>• Decreased urine output</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Call for medical help or take worker to a health facility for evaluation and treatment</li> <li>• Stay with worker until help arrives</li> <li>• Remove worker from hot area and give liquids to drink</li> <li>• Remove unnecessary clothing, including shoes and socks</li> <li>• Cool worker with water, cold compresses, an ice bath, or fans</li> <li>• Encourage frequent sips of cool water</li> </ul>
OFTEN FATAL	<p><b>Heat Stroke</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confusion, altered mental state, slurred speech, loss of consciousness</li> <li>• Hot, dry skin or profuse sweating</li> <li>• Seizures</li> <li>• Very high body temperatures</li> <li>• Fatal if treatment delayed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is an emergency! Call for emergency care immediately!</li> <li>• Move worker to a cool area and remove outer clothing</li> <li>• Cool worker with water, cold compresses, an ice bath, or fans</li> <li>• Circulate air around worker to speed cooling</li> <li>• Place cold, wet cloths or ice on head, neck, armpits, and groin</li> <li>• Stay with worker until emergency medical services arrive</li> </ul>



# SIGNAL<sup>®</sup> OPERATIONAL ALERT



## HEAT-RELATED ILLNESS PREVENTION BASICS

Basic measures to help prevent heat-related illness include **Water, Rest, and Shade.**

### Water

Proper hydration is essential to prevent heat-related illness. Workers should be reminded to drink water on a regular basis throughout their shift and not to rely on feeling thirsty to prompt them to drink. (Workers should be encouraged to drink at least one cup (8 ounces) of water every 20 minutes while working in the heat).

### Rest

The length and frequency of rest breaks should increase as heat stress increases. Breaks should last long enough for workers to recover from the heat. If workers rest in a cooler location, they will be ready to resume work more quickly. Breaks should last longer if there is no cool location for workers to rest. Some workers might be tempted to skip breaks. In hot conditions, skipping breaks is unsafe! Workers should be encouraged to rest during all break periods.

### Shade

Workers should be given a cool location where they can take their breaks and recover from the heat. Outdoors, this might be a shady area, an air-conditioned vehicle, a nearby building or tent, or an area with fans or misting devices. Indoors, workers should be allowed to rest in a cool or air-conditioned area away from sources of heat.

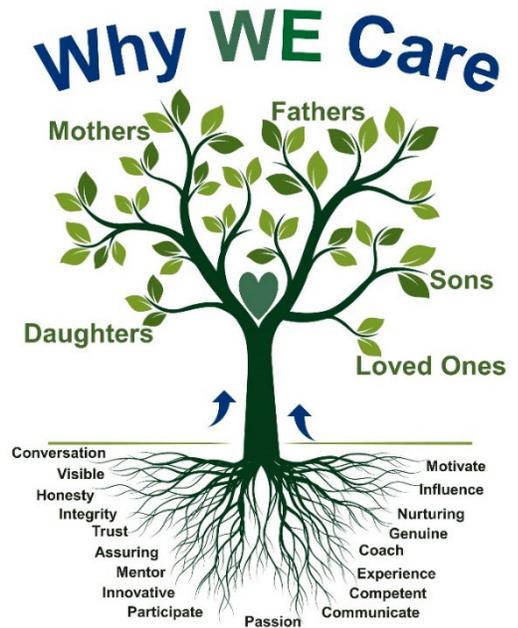
### Awareness

Front line supervisors should include heat awareness in their daily shift safety kickoff sessions and toolbox talks. Employees should both take personal precautions and look out for their work peers. If they see someone that may be impacted by the heat, take action to address and protect their co-worker and let the supervisor know.

### Employer Responsibilities:

OSHA has published standards and guidance <https://www.osha.gov/heat-exposure/standards> and new rulemaking and enforcement is anticipated <https://www.osha.gov/news/newsreleases/national/09202021>. Per OSHA, heat-related hazards that are likely to cause death or serious bodily harm are covered by OSHA's General Duty Clause. Several states that run their own OSHA-approved State Plans have standards for heat exposure: California, Minnesota & Washington.

***In cases of extreme heat, the employer must consider delaying work until the heat event is over, or additional precautions are put in place to assure no heat illness arises. Precautions can include tents, mist sprayers, rotating tasks more often, local freezers with water/hydration supplements, etc.***



***Safety. Live It. Share It.***

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